Cake decorating 21

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

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ORBIS DE AGOSTINI GROUP

Scroll with flowers

This delightfully feminine-looking cake features a delicate scroll moulded from flower paste, arching over a spray of spring flowers.

A versatile cake, this flower-bedecked creation could be used to celebrate many occasions, from a birthday to an engagement. Its very feminine character would make it especially appealing to women of any age, from 18 to 80.

It would also work well as the top tier of a wedding cake, iced in white or ivory instead of pale pink sugarpaste.

The flowers used here are those of late spring and early summer: fully and partly open roses, daphne sprays and double pulled blossoms. Sprays of dried gypsophila give extra height and a delicate effect. By varying the types of flowers used, you could create a number of different effects.

Remember that, being wired, the flowers must not penetrate the cake coating. They are all stuck into a ball of sugarpaste attached to the base support of the scroll decoration.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *25 x 20cm (10 x 8in) oval cake • apricot glaze • 1.25kg marzipan • clear spirit • 1.5kg sugarpaste • flower paste • royal icing • 8 roses • 7 daphne sprays • 10 small sprays of gypsophila • pink petal dust.*

Equipment: *30 x 25cm (12 x 10in) cake board • 1m (1yd) ribbon • roiling pin • scriber • pencil • Garret frill cutter • greaseproof paper • cartridge paper • wax paper • tweezers • nos. 5, 2 and 1 piping tubes.*

Main skills: *moulding flower paste decorations • arranging flowers • fitting a double frill.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓	⧗ ⧗	

SIDE DECORATIONS

We have decorated the sides of the cake with a double scalloped frill, edged with decorative piping, and accompanied by embroidered flowers. But if you wanted to make a simpler cake, you could just pipe on some foliage and add a few tiny pulled blossoms.

TWO-TIER CAKE

If using this design for a wedding cake, make the top tier a 13cm (5in) round cake, and the lower tier a 25 x 20cm (10 x 8in) oval cake. Place the top tier towards the back of the oval cake, not in the centre, and supported on three pillars. In this way the upper spray of flowers can be arranged to cascade down towards a similar one (without a scroll) on the lower tier. The bottom spray would also have to be inserted into a piece of sugarpaste.

For a perfect finishing touch, cover the cake pillars in paste to match the coating, and garland them with tiny pulled blossoms.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1 Covering the cake: Cover the marzipanned cake and cake board with pale pink sugarpaste.

2 Attaching the cake: When the sugarpaste has dried out, secure the cake to the cake board with a few dabs of royal icing.

3 Piping the trim: Pipe a small shell border around the base of the cake using a no. 5 piping tube.

4 Creating the embroidery: Using the template, scribe the embroidery design all round the cake. Pipe on the embroidery and leave it until dry.

5 Preparing for the side decoration: Scribe a line round the cake where the frills are to be attached.

6 Cutting the frills: Cut out the sections of frill from rolled sugarpaste using a Garrett frill cutter.

7 Attaching the frills: Use a little cold water as a glue to attach all the sections of the lower frill, following the scribed line. Once the first frill is completed, attach the upper frill in the same way.

8 Completing the frills: Gently lift the frills up with a paintbrush and pull them away from the cake so they stand out. Leave to dry for two days.

9 Decorating the join: Use a no. 1 tube and royal icing to pipe a decorative line at the point where the frill joins the sides of the cake.

10 Making the scroll decoration: Roll out a small quantity of flower paste and mould to shape using the template.

11 Making the scroll base: Cut out a small disc of paste on which to assemble the decoration.

12 Assembling the decoration: Join the scroll to the disc with royal icing. Leave to dry, supported by a folded sheet of paper.

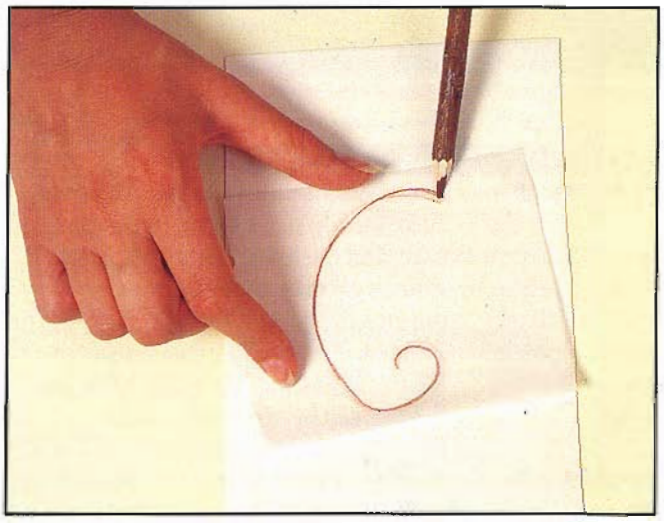
13 Attaching the decoration: Gently lift the scroll and attach it to the centre of the cake with royal icing. Put a small ball of sugarpaste over the base of the scroll.

14 Making the spray: Begin by inserting some sprays of gypsophila into the sugarpaste ball. Start adding the wired roses and other flowers.

15 Completing the flower spray: Make the spray taper off as it gets nearer the edge of the cake. Allow the last few blossoms to overhang its edge. Attach these blossoms with small dabs of royal icing.

16 Finishing the board: Trim the edge of the cake board with ribbon.

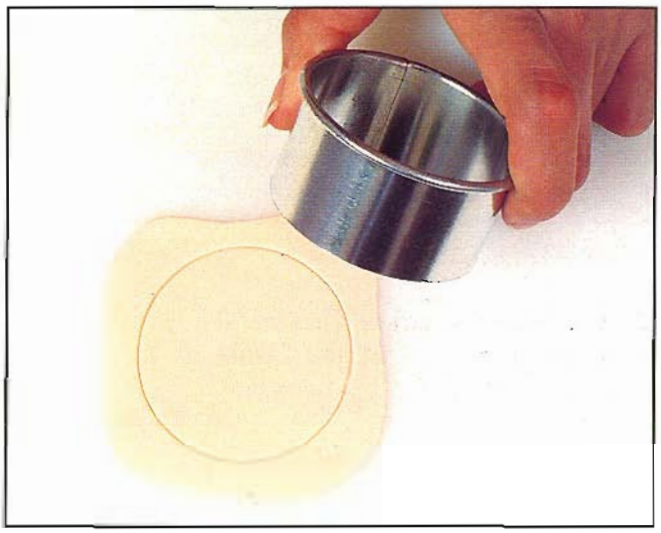
MAKING THE SCROLL



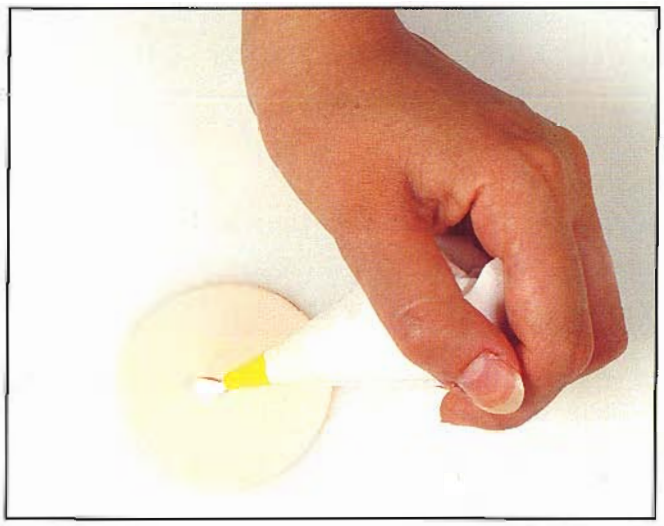
1 Tracing the scroll: Using the template provided, copy the scroll shape on to a sheet of greaseproof paper. Turn the paper over so the paste will not come into contact with the pencilled drawing and secure with masking tape.

2 Rolling out flower paste: Roll a small quantity of flower paste into a ball, then into a sausage shape. Continue rolling the sausage until it is about 5mm (¼in) in diameter, making sure that an even, rounded shape is kept.

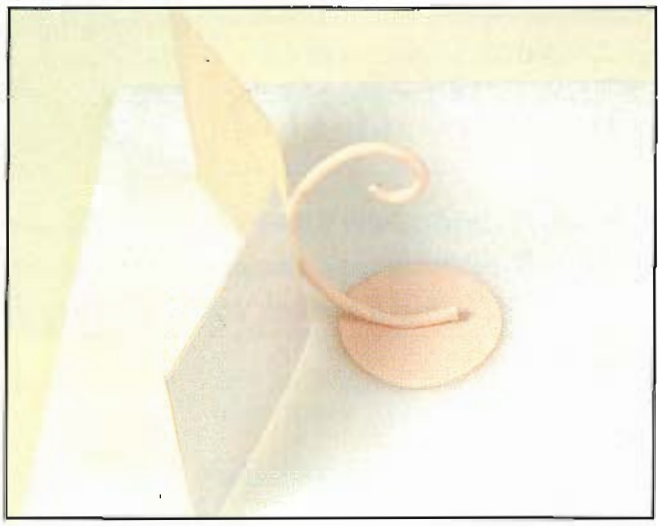
3 Creating the scroll shape: Lay rolled flower paste over the scroll outline and form it into a smooth curved shape. Set aside and leave to dry out. As the decoration is very delicate, make a second shape in case of accidents.



4 Making the support: Roll out a small quantity of flower paste using a non-stick roller, not too thinly. With a sharp knife and the template provided, cut out a small circle of paste to act as a base for the cake-top decoration.



5 Preparing the disc: Set the disc aside and allow it to dry out thoroughly. Mix a small quantity of royal icing, and using a no. 2 piping tube, pipe two or three lines of icing on to the surface of the disc.



6 Assembling the decoration: Gently press the flower paste scroll into the royal icing while still soft. Fold a piece of paper and cut a small slit in the fold. Put the paper close to the scroll to support it until the icing dries.

Alternatives

CHRISTMAS THEME

The scroll with flowers design can be adapted to make a beautiful and unusual Christmas cake simply by varying the colours and flowers used.

Ice the cake in white instead of pink. Make the scroll in red or green, with a white base. Choose seasonal flowers, such as Christmas roses and poinsettias, together with sprays of holly-bearing red berries. Poinsettias are quite large, so you will only need to make about three for the main part of the spray. The glittery gypsophila would still fit in well, or you might like to add a few miniature Christmas baubles.

If making the frills to decorate the sides, finish them with red, gold or silver petal dust. The embroidery motifs could be replaced with something Christmassy. Otherwise, simply decorate the sides with a shell border and sprays of holly or fir. Trim the cake board with red or green ribbon.

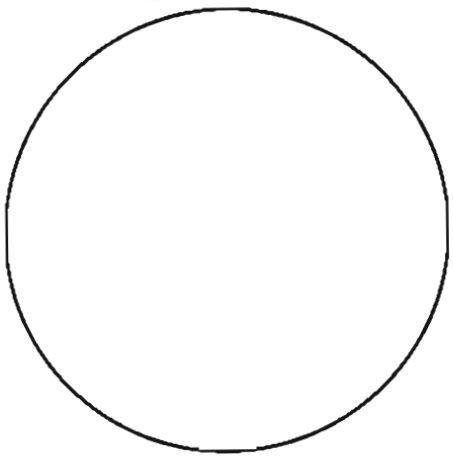
7 Attaching the decoration: Carefully remove the scroll shape from its paper support and attach it to the cake top with a few dabs of royal icing. Put a ball of sugarpaste on top in which to insert the wired flowers.

8 Creating the spray: Begin to insert flowers into the ball of sugarpaste, handling the smaller ones with tweezers. Place the bulk of them under the scroll, then taper off gradually until the last one just tumbles over the edge.

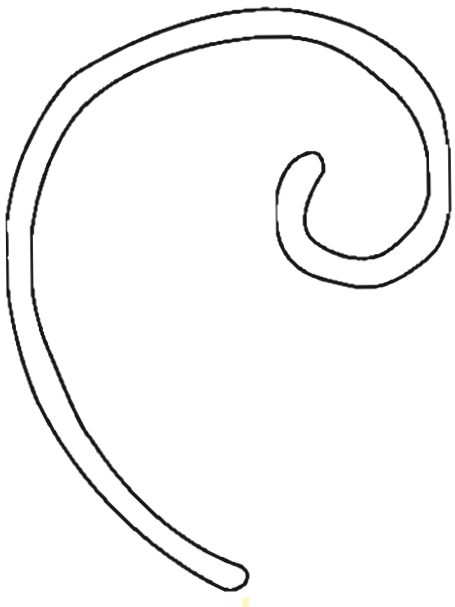
Scroll with flowers

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 36

***HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES:** Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.*



Decoration base



Scroll

Simple marzipan modelling

Modelling marzipan is a simple technique that provides rewarding results. Here we show you how to produce delicious marzipan fruits.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *450g marzipan • cloves • orange, brown, green and yellow paste food colouring • red petal dust • confectioner's varnish.*

Equipment: *non-stick board • star tool or paintbrush • fine paintbrush • flat paintbrush for applying petal dust.*

Main skills: *colouring marzipan • moulding marzipan fruit.*

DIFFICULTY TIME SUITABILITY

Strikingly realistic models of every fruit and vegetable found in the garden can be made from marzipan. Miniature models can be used to decorate cakes or put in boxes and given as gifts, while larger models, up to life-sized, make lovely table decorations.

When modelling fruit and vegetables, try to work with the natural one in front of you in order to get the correct shape and colour. Marzipan models can be any size, so long as all the fruit and vegetables to be used in an arrangement are of the same proportions.

COLOURING THE MARZIPAN

Always use white marzipan for making models, as it takes colour more easily than the yellow variety. Paste food colouring is the best type to use for colouring marzipan. Start with a small amount of colour. If the marzipan is too pale, add a little more colour and knead again. If the marzipan becomes too dark, knead in another small piece of marzipan.

PAINTING ON MARZIPAN

Paint colours can be used to add features, such as the streaks and blemishes on the banana. The marzipan must 'skin' – dry out on the surface – before painting, or the colours will sink in or run.

Never paint directly from the bottle of colour on to the marzipan. If using liquid colour, place some of the colour on greaseproof paper first. Dip the brush into the colour, wipe on the paper until there are no streaks, then paint on the marzipan.

If using paste colour, put a few drops of water on the greaseproof paper, or on a saucer, then add a small amount of paste colouring and continue as before. If painting in several colours, be sure the first colour is dry before painting in the next one.

MARZIPAN BASKET

If you are feeling really adventurous, you can, once you have made your fruits, make a small basket from marzipan, decorated with some crimper work. Make sure that all the fruit is thoroughly dry before arranging it. Use melted chocolate to hold them together if necessary.

tip

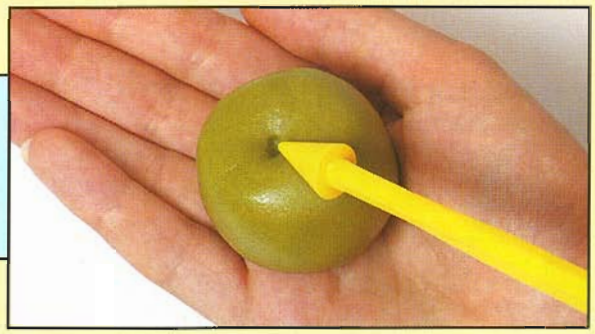
CLEAN HANDS

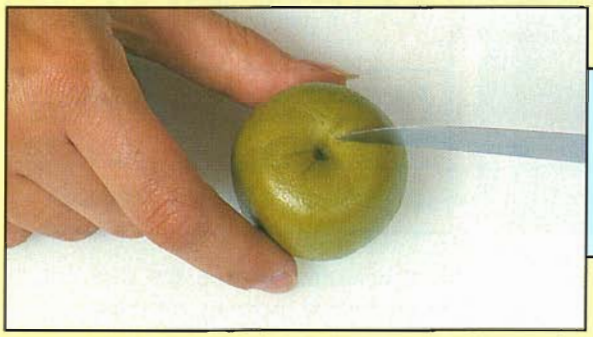
Wearing thin surgical gloves while you colour marzipan will prevent your hands from being stained while kneading in the paste food colouring.

MAKING A MARZIPAN APPLE

1 Rolling the ball: Colour some marzipan a suitable shade of green using paste food colouring, then roll it into a ball using the lower part of the palms of your hands.

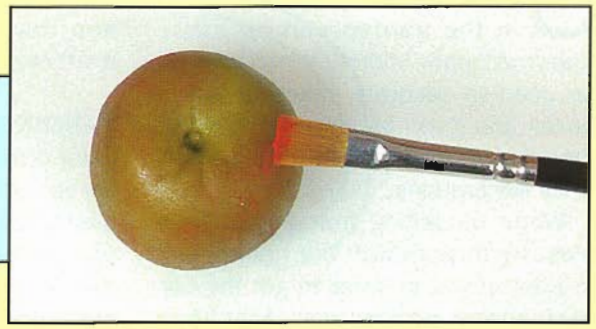
2 Marking the top and bottom: Use the end of a paintbrush or cone end of a star tool to make shallow dents in the top and bottom of the marzipan ball to represent both ends of the apple core.

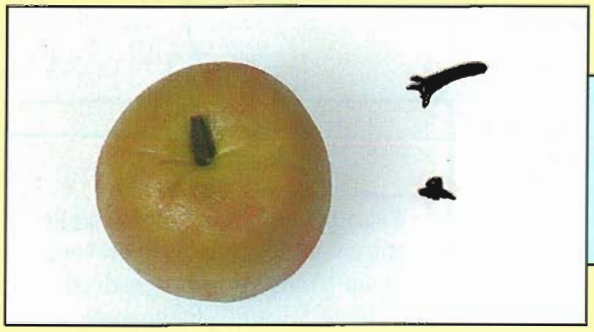




3 Finishing the markings: Use the back of the blade of a knife to lightly mark a small cross centred on the indentations. Do not press too heavily with the knife.

4 Adding colour: Use a flat brush and some red petal dust to dust the green ball for a realistic finish. If you want a glossy finish, you can cover the finished apple in a coat of confectioner's varnish.

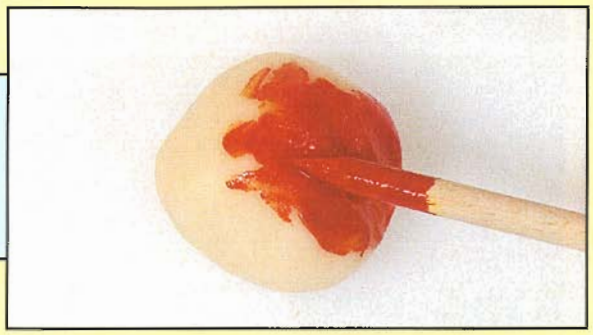


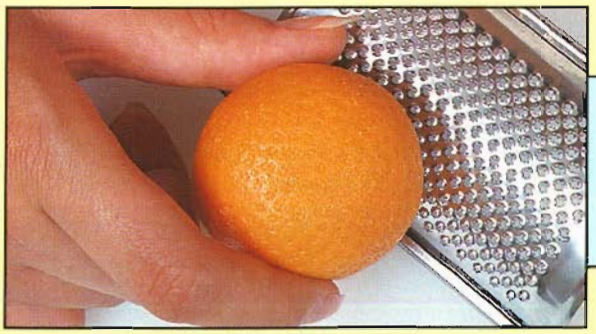


5 Adding the stalk and calyx: Cut a clove in two and stick one half into the indentation at one end to represent the stalk and the other half into the other indentation to represent the calyx.

MAKING A MARZIPAN ORANGE

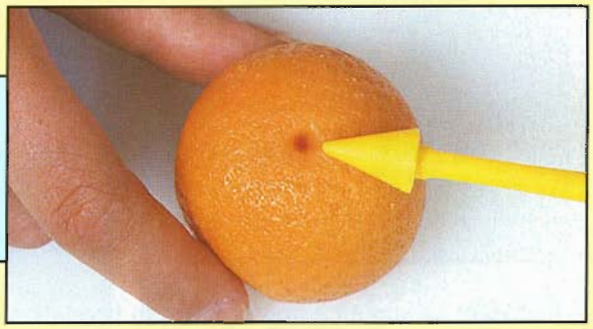
1 Starting off: Colour some marzipan a bright orange colour using tangerine paste food colouring, then roll it into a ball or a slight oval, in the same way as for the apple.

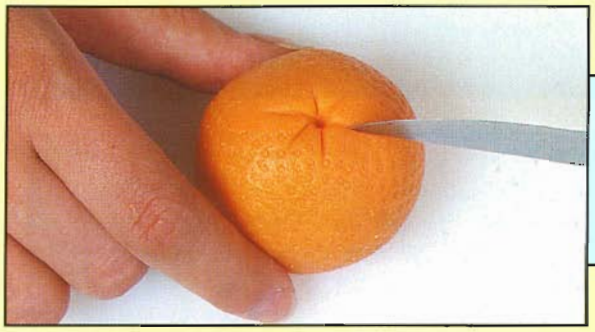




2 Marking the skin: Press a nutmeg grater all over the surface of the ball to achieve a mottled effect. If you do not have a nutmeg grater, a small cheese grater will do the same job.

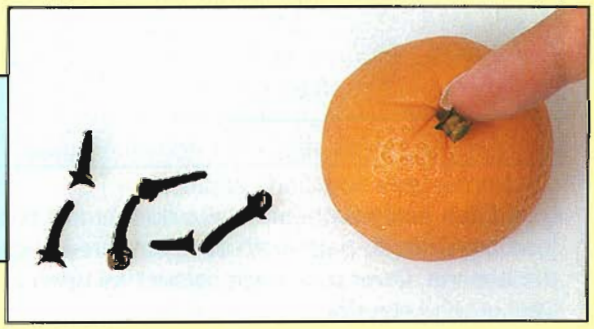
3 Indenting the top: Place the orange ball on a flat surface and make a shallow indentation in the top of it using the handle of a paintbrush or the cone end of a star tool.



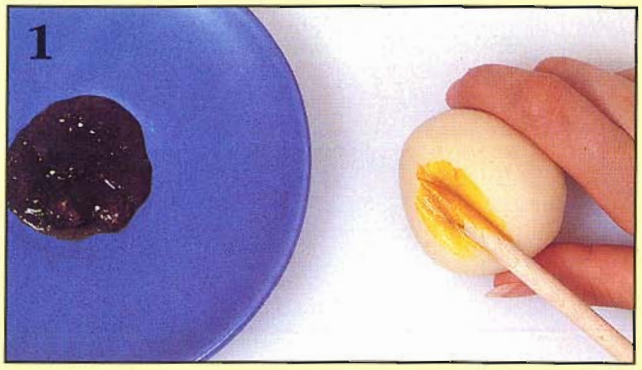


4 Adding a star shape: Use the back of the blade of a knife to mark a star shape over the indentation for the stalk. Use a real orange as a guide if you are unsure of what to do.

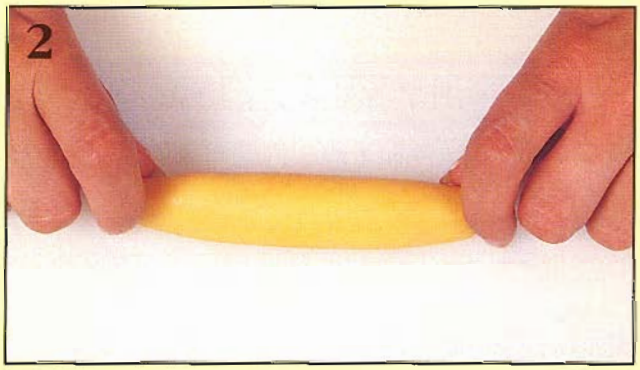
5 Adding a stalk: Use a clove for a stalk or make three tiny brown marzipan sausages and press them into the indentation. Coat with confectioner's varnish if required.



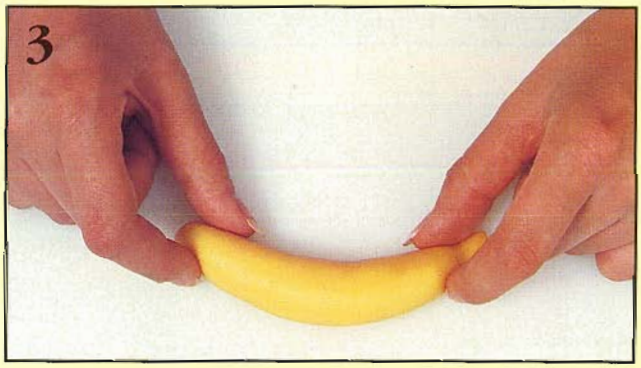
MAKING A MARZIPAN BANANA



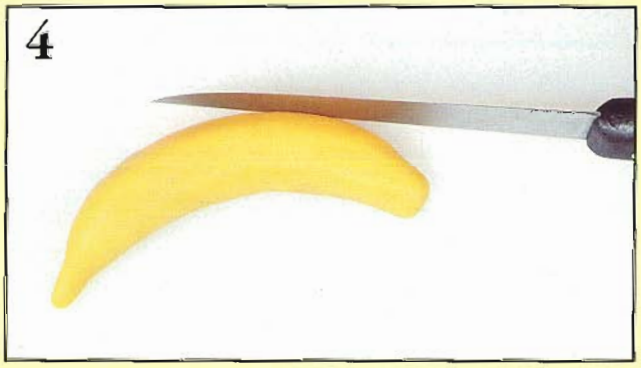
Colour some marzipan yellow using egg yellow paste food colouring, mixed with a touch of brown colouring for a realistic effect. Experiment until you achieve the slightly dull yellow, characteristic of bananas.



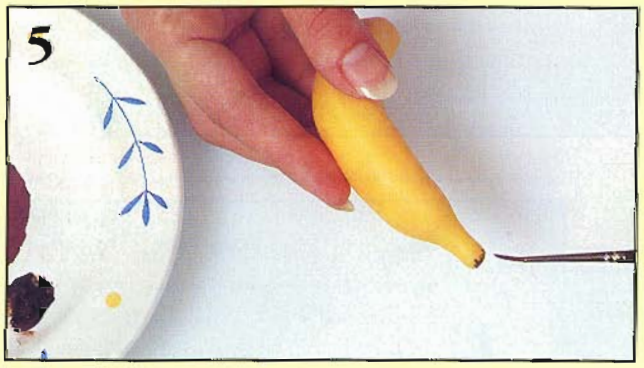
Roll the marzipan into a ball, and then place the ball on a non-stick work surface and roll it into a sausage shape by gently rolling it back and forwards, first using two fingers and then three.



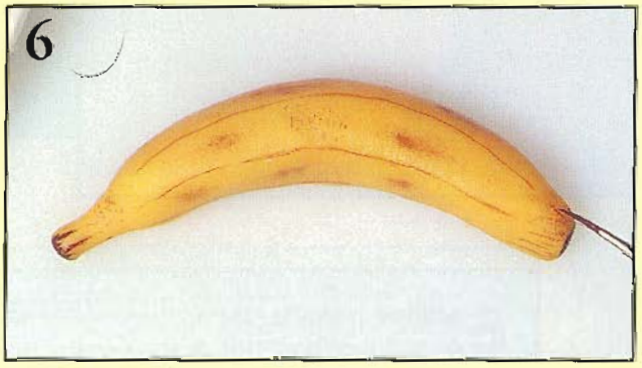
Once the sausage has been rolled to the correct thickness, slightly taper the ends and bend the sausage towards you. Use a fresh banana as a guide to how it should look.



Use the side of a knife blade to shape and slightly flatten the sides of the banana. Most bananas have three or four slightly flattened sides. Do not press too hard or you will mark the surface of the marzipan.



Use a fine paintbrush and some dark brown paste food colouring to paint both of the tapered ends of the banana. Once the brown colour has dried, add a little green colouring.



Finally, paint in some brown streaks over the surface of the banana and a few brown marks. Once the colouring has dried, you can coat the whole surface with a layer of confectioner's varnish.

Colourful clown

Use your skills in bas-relief work to produce this appealing clown with his baggy trousers and ruffled top.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *20 x 15cm (8 x 6in) oval rich fruit cake • apricot jam • marzipan • sugarpaste • Mexican paste • food colouring • egg white • plunger blossoms.*

Equipment: *tracing paper • pencil • ball tool • paintbrush • cake board, 5cm (2in) larger than cake.*

Main skills: *making sugarpaste • making Mexican paste • moulding figures • painting on sugarpaste.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓ ✓	⧗ ⧗	

The universal appeal of the clown makes it a popular choice of decoration for a cake. This colourful clown would be suitable as a birthday cake for a boy or girl, and would be an equally good choice for a fancy dress party for any age group.

The clown is worked in bas-relief, with full, baggy trousers and pleated ruffs, and he makes a very adaptable decoration. Use him on a cake, or on a plaque to form a table decoration at a party. This clown is dressed following a blue and white theme; but you could choose your child's favourite colours. Red and white, or red and yellow, would be equally good combinations. Use food colouring and petal dust to paint details on the clown's face and also to colour his silver pompoms.

The cake or plaque used to support the clown is coated with sugarpaste, and the figure template used to lift the clown into relief is also made from sugarpaste.

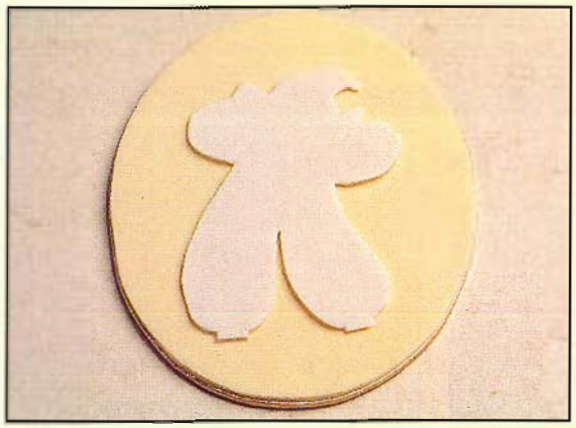
MIXING PASTES TOGETHER

The clown itself is modelled in a mixture of Mexican paste and sugarpaste, the Mexican paste adding the strength needed for bas-relief work. Mexican paste was originally developed in Mexico for moulding figures, and is generally used for modelling clothes on figures. Combining it with sugarpaste makes it more suitable for such a large, edible decoration.

To be certain the two pastes are thoroughly mixed, take a small ball of each and knead together. Repeat this several times, then combine all the small balls and knead well. Repeat until all the paste is combined.

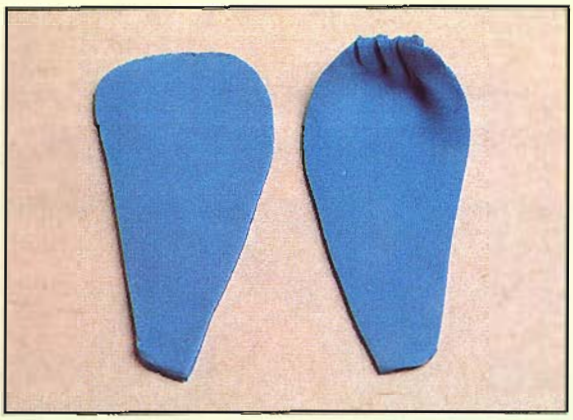
The clown is such a striking decoration in itself that any other additions should be kept simple. Our cake is covered with pale lemon sugarpaste, with a deeper-coloured border piped around the base with a leaf tube. The top edge is decorated with plunger blossoms and scallops of twisted, blue paste ribbon.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



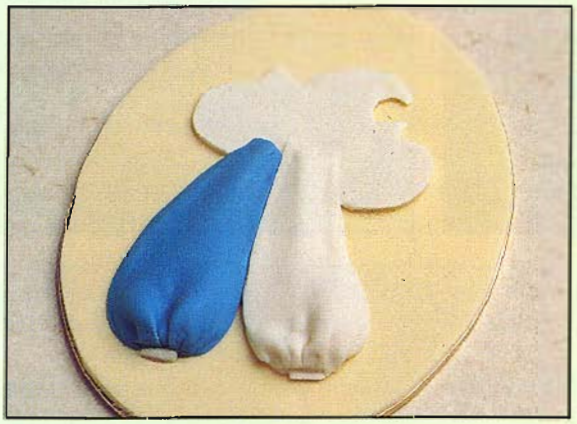
Clown shape: *Roll some white sugarpaste to 3mm (1/8in) thick. Cut out a sugarpaste clown using the basic shape template. Position this centrally, directly on top of the cake, and secure with a little egg white.*

1



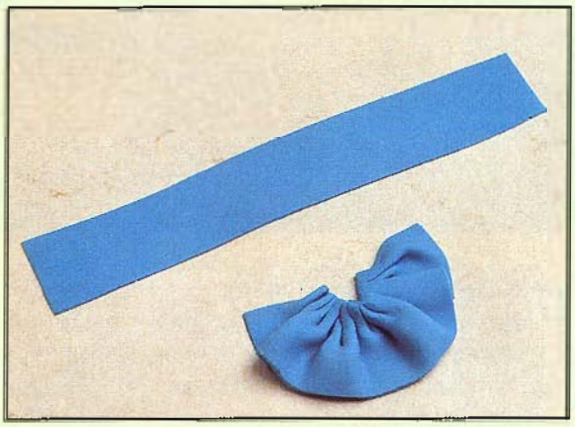
Blue trouser leg: *Roll some blue paste to 1.5mm (1/16in) thick. Using the template as a guide, cut out a left-hand trouser leg, but cut it 1.5cm (1/2in) wider at the base, so that there is enough paste to pleat.*

2



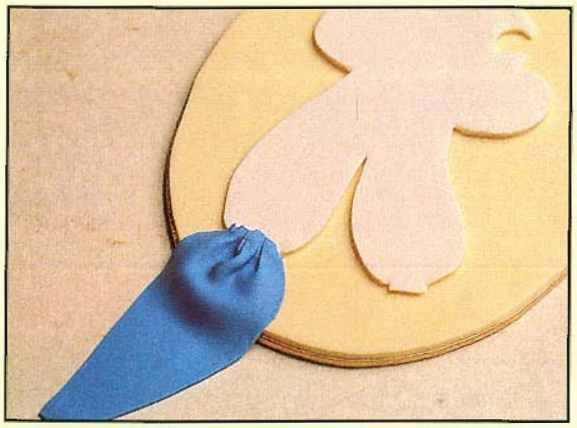
White trouser leg: *Roll some white sugarpaste to 1.5mm (1/16in) thick and repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 to form the white trouser leg. Leave to dry for five minutes, then remove the paintbrush. Squash both top ends downwards.*

5



Making sleeves: *Roll out more blue paste and use the template to cut a strip for one sleeve. Form tiny pleats with your fingers along one edge so that the strip curves into a fan shape. Check the shape against the template.*

6



Pleating trousers: *Form the wider end of the trouser leg into pleats. Then stick the pleated end down as shown, placing the wrong side of the trouser leg to the right side of the clown shape, using a little egg white.*

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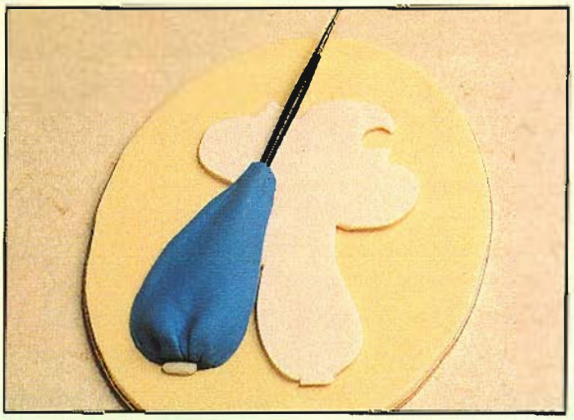


Baggy trousers: *Brush a little egg white up both edges of the trouser leg and flip the trouser leg up, sticking the edges down, to give the effect of fabric ballooning out. Support it with a paintbrush while drying.*

4

Attaching sleeves: *Stick on the blue sleeve, trimming away any excess. Repeat step 6 to form the white sleeve. Use a ball tool to form indentations in both sleeve centres. Make two more indentations for pompoms on trousers.*

7

Neck ruffles: *Roll out some more white paste and cut it into two narrow strips. Pleat the strips with your fingers and, using egg white, attach them in two rows over the top of the sleeves to form the neck ruffle.*

8

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Mexican paste

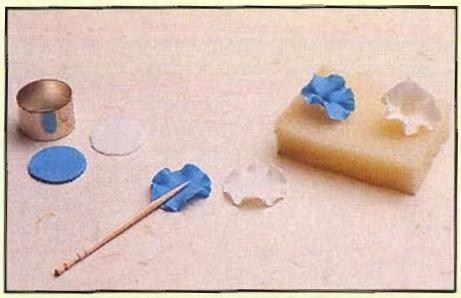
Ingredients:

225g sifted icing sugar
15ml (3 tbsp) gum tragacanth
5ml (1 tsp) liquid glucose
30ml (6 tsp) cold water

Method

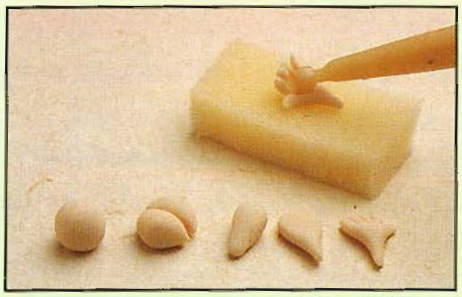
- Sift the sugar and gum tragacanth on to a clean work surface. Make a small well in the centre of the mixture, then add the liquid glucose and 25ml (5 tsp) of cold water.
- Taking sugar from the outside, start to mix the paste and knead until all the ingredients are blended together. Add the remaining 5ml (1 tsp) of water if the mixture is too firm.
- If the paste is to be used for moulding bodies, add 15ml (3 tsp) of cornflour to the paste and mix well in.
- The paste made with cornflour should be used immediately. If you have more than you need, make extra heads, bodies and arms to keep in stock.
- The paste made without cornflour will keep for about three weeks prior to modelling. It can also be frozen.
- Before modelling, wrap the paste in a polythene bag, place in an airtight container, and store for a few days to allow the gum to expand.

Wrist ruffle: *Roll out white and blue paste. Cut one white and one blue round. Frill edges and support on a piece of sponge. Push a ball tool into centre to cup the shape. Make a central hole.*



9

Forming hands: *Roll some flesh-coloured paste into a ball, and cut in half. Form each half into a pear shape; flatten broader end. Cut fingers and a thumb at the broad end. Use a ball tool to cup the hand.*



10

Hands and face: *Join wrist frills and hands. Attach with egg white. Mould remaining paste into a face and a nose. Attach face to clown. Make a hollow for nose and attach. Scribe on a curved mouth.*

11

Accessories: *Roll out blue paste and shape into a hat. Stick in position, then push yellow paste through sieve to form strands of hair. Mould boots from brown paste and attach at ankles of trousers.*

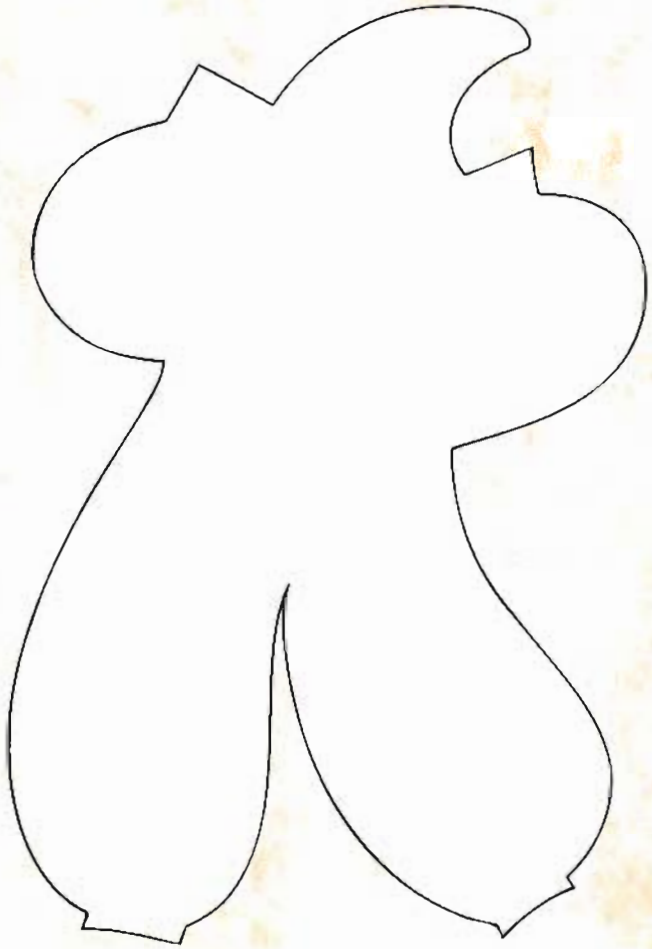
12

Colourful clown

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 37

HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES: *Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.*

Finished bas-relief clown



Clown: basic shape

Working with lace

Lace pieces add a delicate touch to a celebration cake. Here we give you some ideas for using lace as a major decorative feature.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *royal icing.*

Equipment: *wax paper or plastic film • tracing paper • pencil • no. 00 or 0 piping tube • embroidery scissors • dressmaking pins • tulle.*

Main skills: *piping and attaching lace work • piping lace on tulle.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓ ✓	⧗ ⧗ ⧗	

Lacework in cake decorating is a commonly used technique with a very special effect. The surprisingly delicate results that can be achieved lead to direct comparisons with lacework in dressmaking. The delicacy of lacework makes it a particularly suitable technique for use on a wedding or christening cake. This is particularly so in cases where you might wish to echo the pattern of the dress fabric on the cake decoration.

You can even incorporate tulle, which is fine net, into piped lacework on a cake. This is very useful to give support to heavier pieces of lace, particularly as borders around a cake, or to use as the integral part of a design, as in the wings of a butterfly or the petals of a flower.

The consistency of the icing is particularly important when piping on to tulle. If it is too stiff it will crumble away from the net when dry. If it is too soft, it will not retain the shape of the pattern.

Ordinary piped lacework can be applied flat to the cake, or set at a 45-degree angle to enhance a frill, plaque or other feature. Lacework on tulle is applied to the cake using royal icing; in some cases, however, the design must be pinned to the cake to support it until the icing is dry.

PERFECTING LACEWORK

Practice is the secret of successful piped lacework – the more you practice, the more even your work will become.

Remember, it is not a disaster if some of your piping gets broken or damaged. Simply remove the damaged piece, being careful not to disturb the lace on either side, and apply a new piece with a dab of royal icing. Store extra lace on wax paper in an airtight tin in a dry place.

In the following pages, we give you ideas for unusual designs for lacework, and we also provide all the templates you will need to produce them.

tip

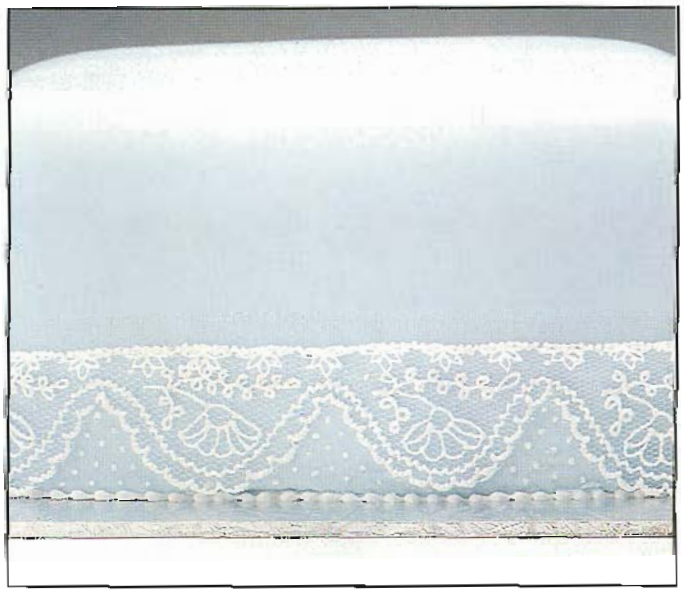
STORING LACE

Silica gel crystals stored in the tin with lace pieces will absorb any excess moisture which would soften the icing.

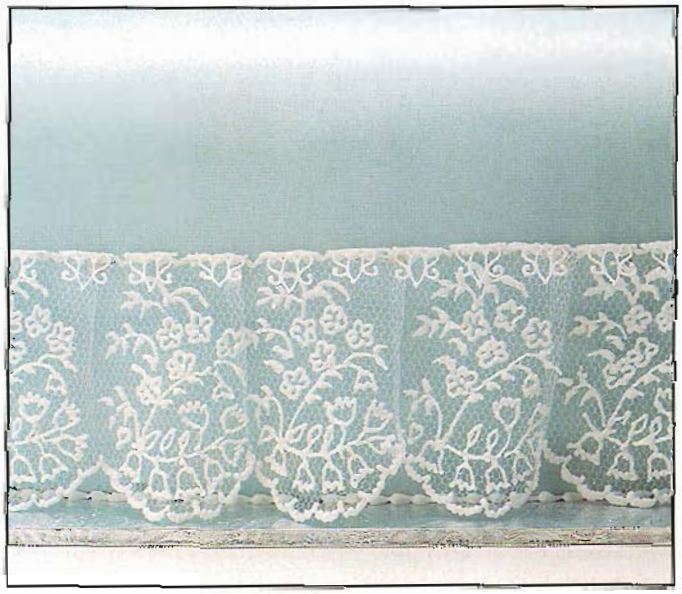
LACEWORK ON TULLE

1 Place wax paper over the traced design and lay a piece of tulle on top. Using a no. 0 tube, pipe the outlines and solid areas. Leave to dry overnight. Cut out the flower using embroidery scissors and attach to cake with dots of icing.

2 Pipe each fuchsia motif on to fine tulle. Bend tulle into a curve by laying it over the handle of a wooden spoon. Cut out the individual motifs when dry and pin to the cake, securing with small dots of icing. Remove pins when icing is dry.

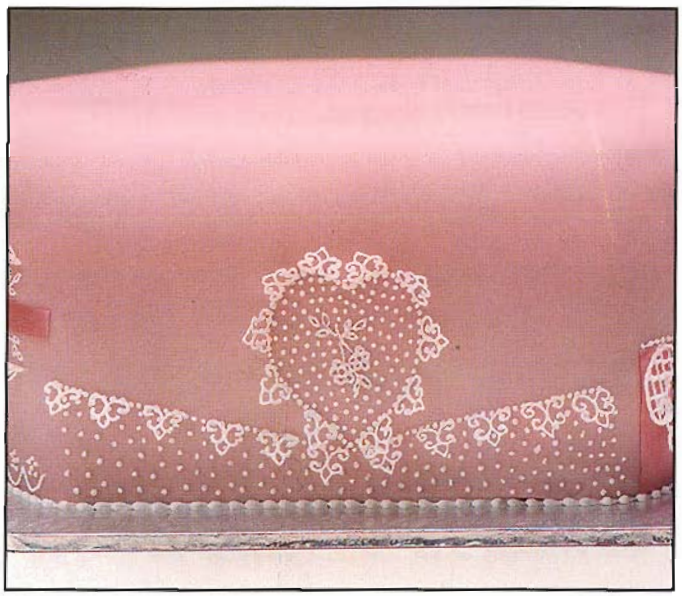


3 For this straight border, cut a strip of tulle deeper than the motif and secure to wax paper placed over the traced pattern. Pipe repeat pattern, allow to dry, then cut out close to scallop. Attach to cake with a line of icing.



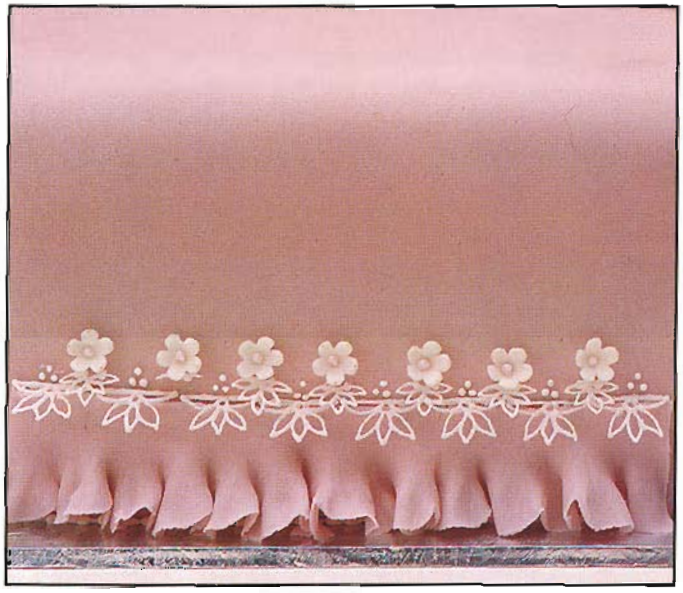
4 For a pleated border, pipe the design as for step 3. When dry, trim away excess tulle. Form border into pleats and catch fabric together at top with stitches to hold. Pin to the cake and pipe a line of icing to secure. Remove pins when icing is dry.

LACE SIDE DECORATIONS

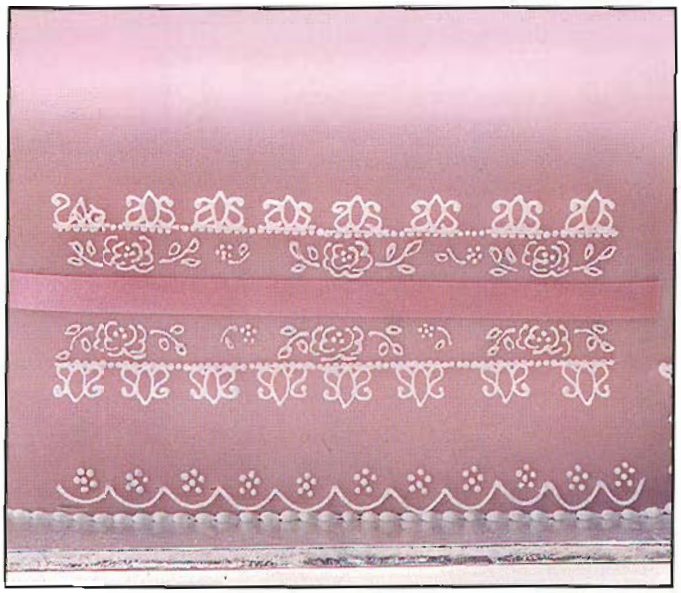


1 In this design, small lace pieces are used to accentuate a heart shape which has been scribed on the side of the cake. The spotted decoration could be replaced with a monogram or floral design.

2 Here, large pieces of lace are attached to the top of a band of ribbon and left suspended. As they are a little heavier than the small pieces, they should be supported for a few minutes until the icing is able to hold them.



3 Here, two rows of lace are attached to the top of a straight frill. The top row of lace pieces are smaller than the bottom row. Small plunger flowers are positioned above the lace as an additional decoration.

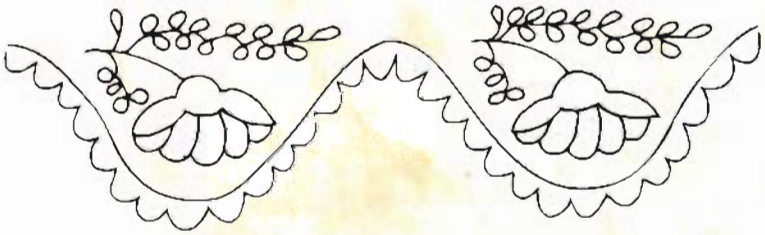


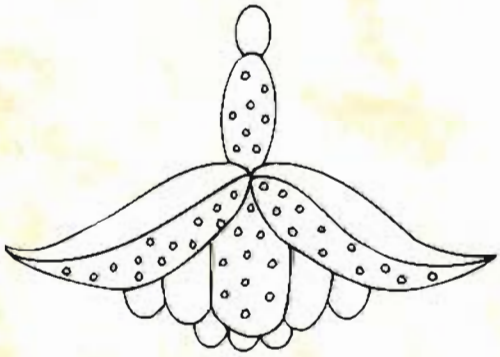
4 This unusual side decoration consists of a thin band of ribbon at the centre, with an embroidery design and a row of lace either side of it. A small scalloped line with piped embroidery flowers completes the side design.

Working with lace

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 38

HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES: *Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each one of the templates is separate.*





Starting with scrolls

Starting with half circles

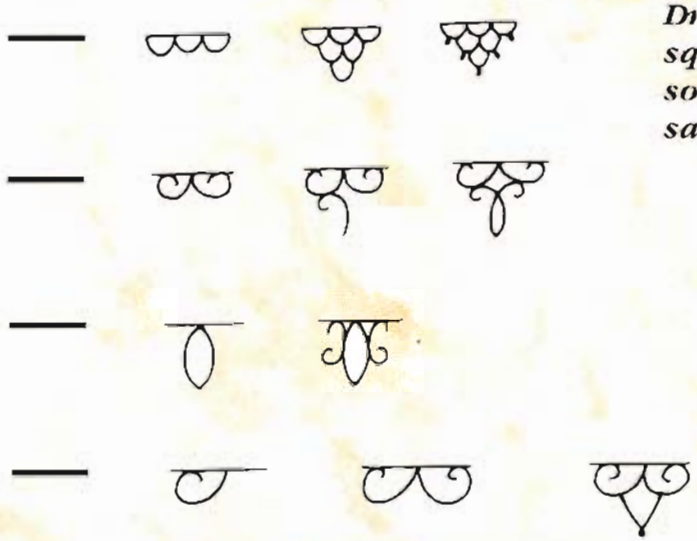
Arrangement of petal shapes

Variations on hearts

Based on oval centre

Working with lace

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 38



Draw a row of lace pieces onto squared paper or graph paper so that the pieces are all the same size

Chocolate rabbit

Delicious chocolate rabbits are easy to make from commercial moulds, and make a perfect gift for any chocaholic.

A chocolate rabbit makes a good alternative to an Easter egg and, given the expense of shop-bought eggs, making rabbits as Easter gifts could be a money-saver as well as fun. An 18cm (7in) high chocolate rabbit uses about 75g (3oz) of chocolate, and smaller figures are even more economical.

Two types of mould are generally available: soft plastic half moulds, where the two pieces are moulded separately and then stuck together; or rigid plastic moulds, which are more expensive, but do make a complete figure. They come in two halves, which are clipped together before the chocolate is poured in.

Correct preparation of the moulds is important for the best results. Wash them thoroughly in warm, soapy water, and then rinse with clean, warm water, ensuring that every crevice is reached. Polish the moulds with a clean soft cloth before pouring in the chocolate.

The moulds have quite detailed designs, with lots of crevices and indentations, and so it is important that all of these are filled with chocolate.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *block of milk, plain or white chocolate • ribbons (optional).*

Equipment: *double saucepan, or saucepan and heatproof bowl • wooden spoon • small ladle • rabbit mould • greaseproof paper • small sharp knife.*

Main skills: *working with chocolate • moulding chocolate figures.*

DIFFICULTY ✓ | TIME ⧗⧗ | SUITABILITY

Ladle the chocolate into the mould, until about one-third full in the case of half moulds, or half full for the rigid plastic moulds. Gently roll the mould around in your hands until the chocolate has coated all the surfaces. Tapping the side of the mould sharply should stop air bubbles forming. Invert it over a bowl to allow any excess chocolate to drip back .

BUILDING UP THE LAYERS

When the first layer is dry, check that there are no thin or uncoated areas. If there are, add more chocolate. In any case, repeat the process once more to give the figure a second coating of chocolate, and allow to drain over a bowl again. When the chocolate has stopped dripping, place the mould on waxed paper and put it in the fridge. It will take approximately half an hour or so for the mould to turn a silvery-grey colour, which means that the chocolate inside has set, contracting away from the mould.

Remove the mould from the figure very carefully. Trim any excess chocolate using a sharp knife, then join the halves by brushing the edges with melted chocolate. Handle the finished figures as little as possible in order to prevent fingermarking and damage.

DESIGN TOUCH

You can enhance details, such as the inside of the ears or the rabbit's nose, using white chocolate. Pipe this into the appropriate area of the mould first, and allow to dry before adding the rest of the chocolate.

Add ribbons around your rabbit's neck, wrap him in cellophane, and tie with a big bow for an extra special gift.

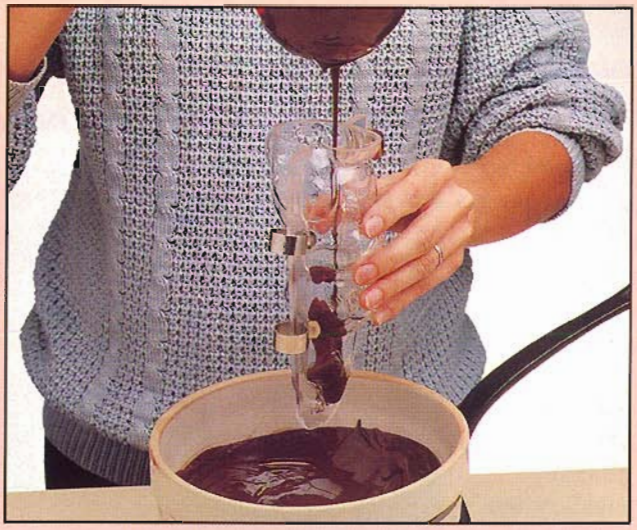
Present your moulded chocolate rabbit along with a small wicker basket of filled and wrapped chocolate eggs.

Use a collection of small chocolate rabbits to decorate an Easter cake.

Figures can be made to resemble marble by moulding them in a mixture of dark and white chocoate. Fill the mould with white chocolate, then add a little dark chocolate and swirl it in with a cocktail stick.

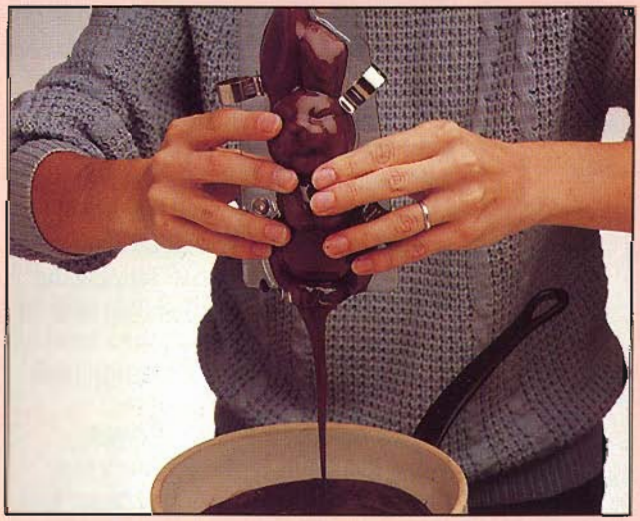
Use a soft, two-part mould to create two-tone figures by filling one half with white melted chocolate and the other with dark or milk chocolate.

Decorate moulded chocolate figures by piping on features, designs or lettering in contrasting-coloured chocolate.



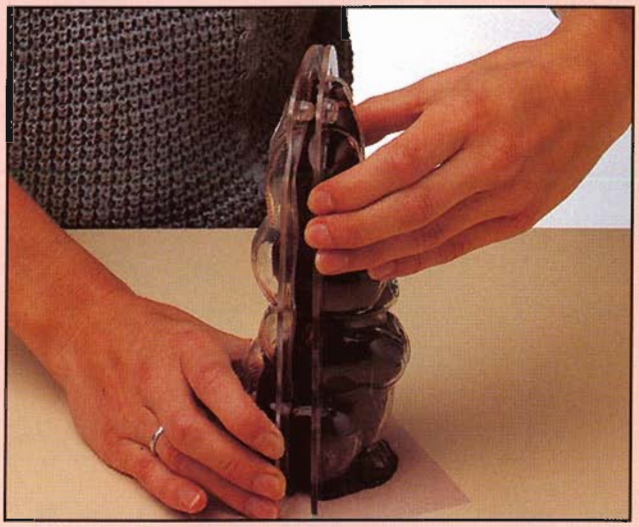
1 Filling the mould: To make a figure using a rigid plastic mould, melt chocolate over gently simmering water, either in the top of a double saucepan or in a heatproof bowl. Stir until smooth. Hold mould upside down and ladle in the chocolate, half filling the mould.

2 Coating with chocolate: Tap the mould sharply to remove any air bubbles. Gently roll the mould around to spread the chocolate evenly all over the indentations in the mould.



3 Setting the chocolate: Invert the mould, and drain the excess chocolate back into the bowl. Allow the chocolate to dry in the mould, then check to see that the surfaces are completely covered. Recoat the inside with more chocolate, and then drain again. Repeat once more for a thicker figure.

4 Leaving to set: Place the figure on wax paper, standing upright. Chill in the fridge for about 30 minutes until the mould has a silvery-grey appearance, which means that the chocolate has set. Remove the clips.



5 Separating the mould: Slide the point of a sharp knife or a fingernail between the two halves of the mould and gently press the join with your thumbs until one half comes away from the other.

6 Releasing the figure: Lay the figure, with the exposed chocolate side down, on a folded tea towel. Gently pull the mould sideways, at the same time pressing on the top with your thumbs. This should release the rest of the figure. Trim away any excess chocolate and join the halves together with melted chocolate.

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Using moulds

You can make all sorts of other figures and animals in chocolate, using figure moulds. Take a trip to your cake-decorating supply shop for inspiration.

- For seasonal celebrations, keep an eye out for cherubs, snowmen, Father Christmas, ducks, rabbits, and swans.

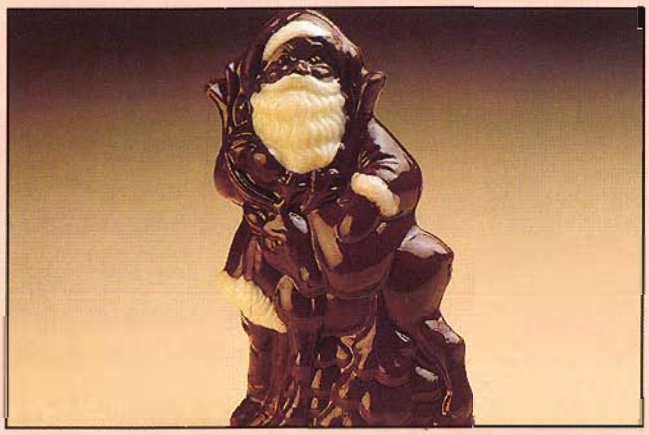
- Mould them in milk or plain chocolate, or white chocolate which can be coloured. (Try white chocolate snowmen and swans, pink rabbits and mice, or yellow ducks.)

- You can also pipe chocolate on to wax paper, allow it to set, and use it to add extra features to your figures. Make a broom for your snowman, for example, or a chocolate branch for a bird to rest on.

- Some of the most popular chocolate moulds are those for making Easter eggs. Homemade Easter eggs can be produced in an infinite variety of sizes, from tiny ones for decorating a cake top, to large ones designed to be finished with ribbon and lettering and given as Easter presents.

- Another very popular mould is the scallop shell. This looks very attractive moulded in white or marbled chocolate, then filled with dark chocolates.

Large chocolate moulds



1 Making figures with insets: For chocolate figures with white insets, first fill the areas to be white with melted white chocolate, and then leave them until they have set hard. Then mould the dark chocolate in the usual way.

2 Moulding animals: All kinds of animals and birds can be moulded in chocolate. Compact figures like this thoughtful owl are particularly successful. Other popular ones include bears, dragons and dinosaurs.

3 Combination figures: Two of the most popular chocolate figures, rabbits and Easter eggs, can be combined to make a cart filled with sugar eggs. The top of the egg is removed after moulding, using a heated knife.

4 Using white chocolate: This has great possibilities for figures to use on Christmas cakes. Here, a white chocolate snowman is decorated with a red marzipan scarf. The broom is piped from milk chocolate.

helpline TYPES OF CHOCOLATE

For moulding figures it is essential to use real chocolate, not chocolate cake covering. It must also be the right kind – ordinary chocolate bars may have been made by a different method and be unsuitable. There are basically two types: baker's chocolate, and couverture.

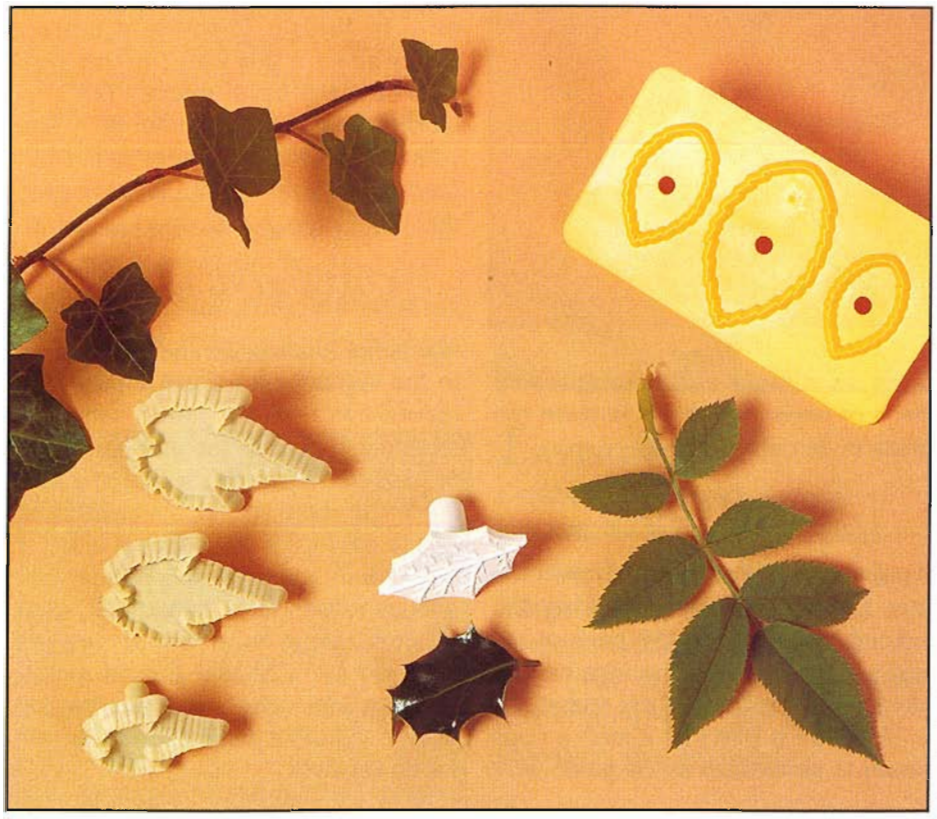
Baker's chocolate is widely available from supermarkets and cake-decorating suppliers. It is easy to use because most of the cocoa butter has been replaced with vegetable fat. This means it does not have to be tempered, a process which crystallizes the fat in the cocoa butter.

Couverture gives a product which is smooth and glossy, with a fine flavour. It is not so widely available, and must be tempered – heated and then cooled to a precise temperature, using a sugar thermometer.

Always melt the chocolate over gently simmering water, in a bowl or the top of a double saucepan, to avoid overheating. If it gets too hot, white streaks may appear.

Leaf cutters

There is a wide range of leaf cuttters available on the market. Here we look at the most popular ones.



Making sugar flowers has become a favourite pastime for many sugarcraft enthusiasts, and over the past 10 years manufacturers of sugarcraft equipment have developed a host of different and useful tools to help make the flowers and leaves that originally had to be modelled by hand or cut out freehand with a scalpel.

POPULAR LEAF CUTTERS

At first, most people simply wanted to make the flowers, and the leaves were of secondary importance. But as people's skills improved, foliage took on an added importance, and hence a demand for an interesting selection of leaf cutters to accompany these beautiful flowers arose.

Leaves come in an enormous variety of shapes, colours and textures, and there are cutters available for every type of leaf imaginable.

The most popular leaf cutters correspond to the favourite flowers for making floral sprays for wedding cakes. Thus, rose leaves are perhaps the most used variety of cutter, with the ivy leaf in second place. For the specialist sugarcraft flower maker, however, anything is possible, from tiny cutters to construct maidenhair fern, to various sizes of maple leaf.

LEAF SHAPES

Leaf shapes and forms can be divided into groups by: their edge patterns – either smooth or serrated; their general description – oval, oblong and linear, to name but a few; and the way they are put together – singly, on a stem, or in a compound group.

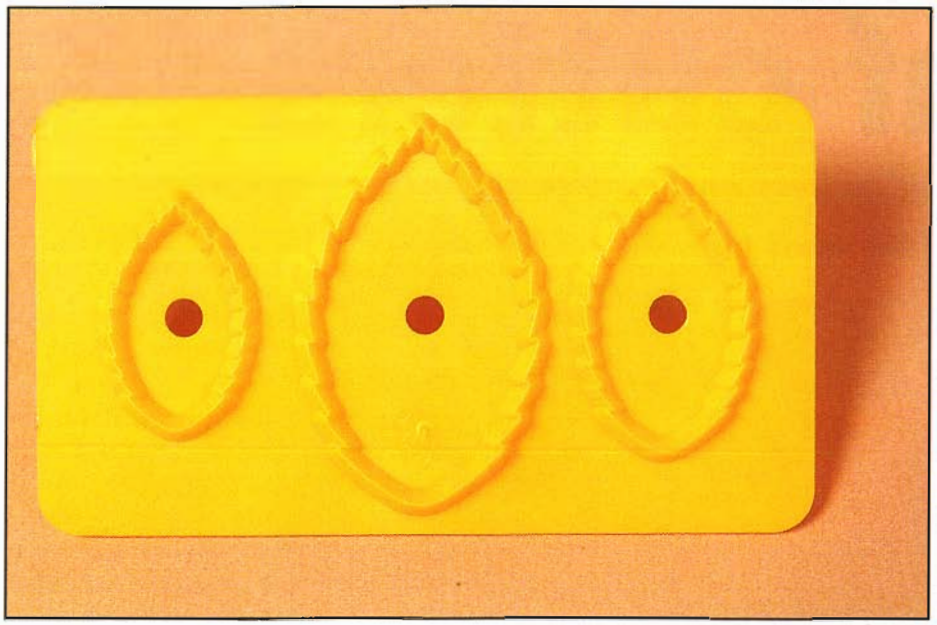
It is really a matter of personal choice which type of cutter the cake decorator uses. Cutters are made from a food-grade material – either plastic or metal (usually stainless steel banding). Both plastic and metal cutters are generally packed in sets, and plastic cutters may incorporate a leaf veiner, or have a separate veiner that comes as part of the set.

LEAF FORMATIONS

In nature, leaves on a stem or plant vary in size, so when trying to reproduce them in sugar we need a selection of sizes to create a realistic display. It is not always the case that the large leaves come at the base of the stalk, although that would seem the natural progression; indeed, with a rose the top leaf of the stem is invariably slightly larger than the two either side of it. Therefore, when trying to reproduce leaves in sugar, it is a good idea to have a real model to work from, either picked from the garden, or an illustration from a book.

Study how the stem is constructed. Note whether the leaves grow on either side of the stem, or round it in a spiral. Also note where the larger ones are situated, and whether they are randomly attached to the stalk.

Cutters provide a quick and easy way of reproducing the same shape of leaf quickly and consistently and to the same design. You will also need a few other tools to make the job easy. Once the leaves are cut out, the edges are then made finer with a ball tool. Place the cut piece on the palm of the hand. Then, with the tool half on the paste and half on the hand,



Rose leaf cutters are sold in a variety of sizes.

gently move around the edge, making it finer. If required, the leaf can be marked by pressing the paste on to a plastic or rubbed leaf veiner, which will reproduce the markings in the paste and make it look more natural. Alternatively, a veining tool can be used to press the veins into the paste individually. The leaves are then allowed to dry. Placing them over some type of former is advisable, as leaves generally have some curves in them. You can use something as simple as a crumpled-up piece of paper, which will support the paste in its curved shape.

WIRED LEAVES

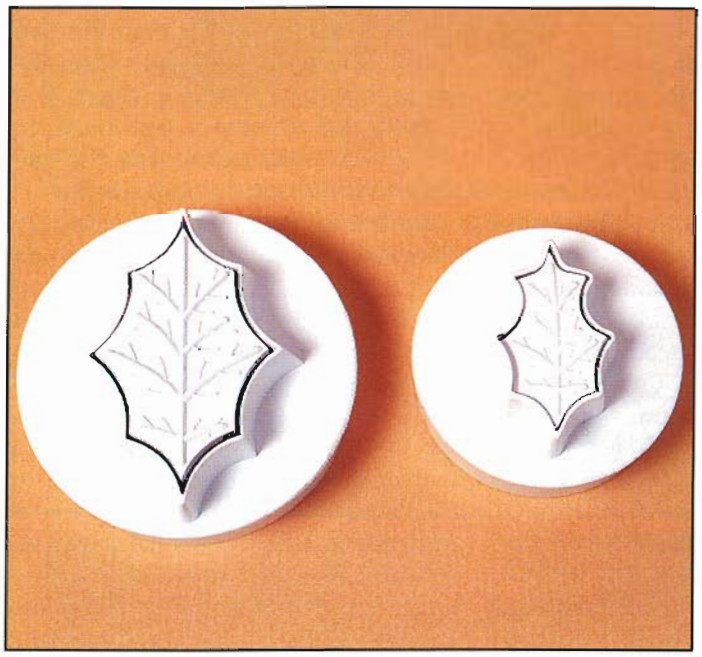
If the leaves are to be wired, then the wire has to be inserted during the making process, or if the back of the leaf will not be seen the wire can be stuck on to the back of the shape.

To insert a wire into a leaf, a ridge needs to be created in the paste as it is rolled out. Leaving a tiny strip of thicker paste in the centre, roll out either side as thinly as possible. Then, cut the leaf out, with this thicker strip going from the base of the cutter – where the wire will be inserted – to the tip of the leaf cutter. Gently insert a 26g wire into the thick strip from the base to about half way up the length of the paste. Thin and vein as described above, and twist the leaf slightly to give it movement and life. Finally, set to dry.

COLOURING LEAVES

Additional shading can be brushed on to the leaf edges with petal dust. The leaves can then be glazed with confectioner's varnish for a shiny finish, or passed through the steam of a boiling kettle, both to set the petal dust and to produce a waxy appearance.

Whether you wish to produce just enough leaves for a small floral spray or the large number of leaves required for a bonsai tree in sugar, different leaf cutters will provide you with a valuable cake-decorating aid for flower work.



Holly leaf cutters can be bought in sets containing two leaf cutters and veiners.

Ivy leaves can be used to accompany a wide range of different flowers.

All the terms and techniques of cake decorating

Lacework

A fine, delicate, piping technique using royal icing to resemble real lace. You can trace patterns on to greaseproof paper from printed lace designs found in books, or use a piece of real lace as a guide. Lace pieces are piped, using a no. 0 or 00 piping tube, directly on to wax paper, secured over the template. Allow to dry, and remove from the paper with a cranked palette knife. Pieces may be either attached flat, or made to stand out from the cake at an angle of 45 degrees, and secured with a dab of icing.

Lattice work

Also called trellis work, this technique uses parallel diagonal lines which cross each other to form open diamonds. Lattice work can be used to decorate the top surface of a cake, or to create three-dimensional shapes, such as a basket or dome. A flat lattice design should be started in the centre and worked outwards to ensure the lines are parallel. Working from the back towards the front will ensure straightness. Allow the first lines to dry before piping the second set.

Layering

Cutting a cake – usually a sponge – horizontally, and spreading a filling between these layers. Most common fillings include plain buttercream, sometimes teamed with jam, and buttercream flavoured with either a fruit juice or puréed fruit, such as lemon or strawberry, or with chocolate.

Layer cakes

Cakes which are layered and filled before being iced. There may be two, three or more layers, depending on the depth of the cake.

Leaf cutter

A specialised cake-decorating tool for cutting out the shape of a leaf marzipan, and sugarpaste or flower paste for a floral design. Individual shapes available include ivy leaves and rose leaves. Once cut, the leaves need to be veined to achieve a realistic effect.

Leaves

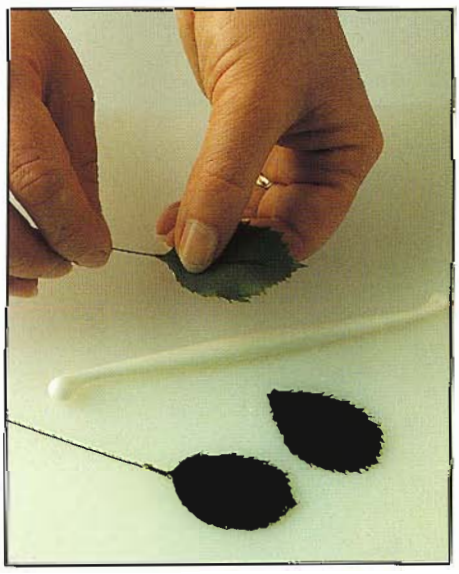
An integral part of a floral design which can add depth of colour and variety of texture. Depending on the design, leaves may be cut from paste with a cutter, moulded free-hand, piped using royal icing in a bag with a V-shape cut at the end, painted using food colouring, or bought in from a supplier.

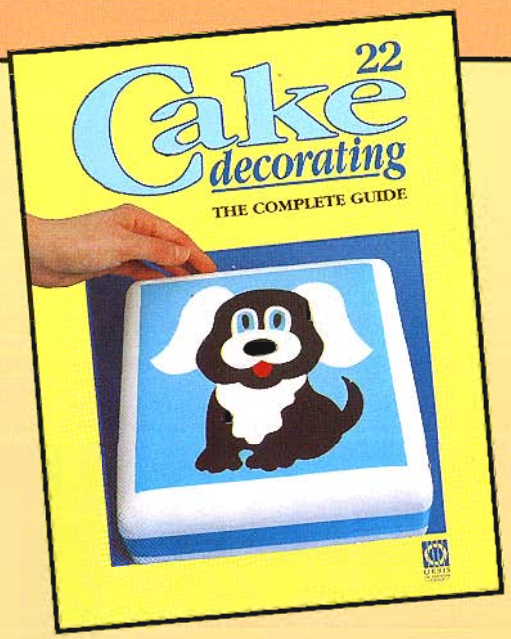
Left-hand piping

Most design instructions assume right-handed piping. A left-handed decorator will need to reverse some procedures, such as starting points, to achieve the expected effect. Left-handed tubes are available from specialist shops, but turning standard tubes to suit will probably be sufficient.

Lemon curd

A rich confection made from eggs, sugar, butter and lemons, which is often mixed with cream for use as a cake filling. Melt 225g of butter in a basin over a pan of hot water. Add 450g of granulated sugar and the finely grated rind and juice of three large lemons. Allow to cool. Beat three whole eggs or six egg yolks thoroughly in a second basin and add the cooled lemon mixture. Return to the heat and simmer until thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Pour in pots and cover tightly.





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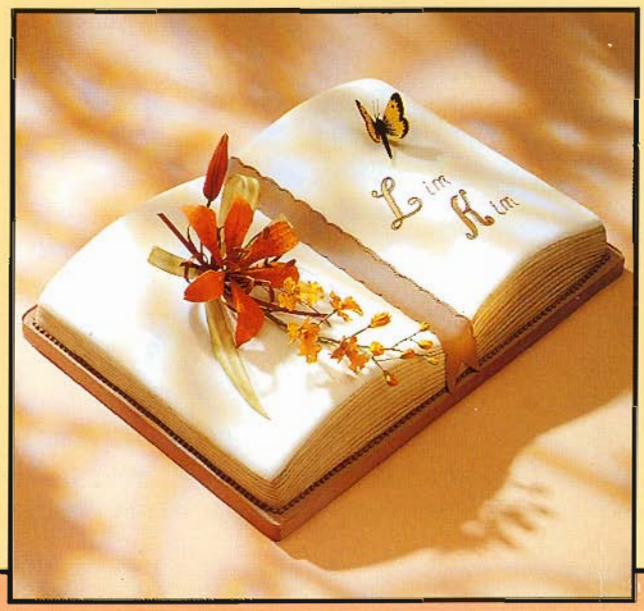

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